

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
CONGRESSMAN TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



NEWS RELEASE

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Davis Asks Secretary Rumsfeld to
Speed Up Security Clearance Process

Chairman Says Continuing Delays Affect National Security

Washington, D.C. - House Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) wrote today to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld asking him to take immediate steps to reduce the time it takes for the Defense Department to process security clearances for government contractors.

The letter came on the heels of a Full Committee hearing this morning, during which Members learned that it takes, on average, more than a year for the government to grant a security clearance. This has led to an enormous backlog of pending clearances. It also has created a situation where companies are paying a premium to hire individuals who already have clearances – money that drives up the cost of government contracts.

A copy of the letter follows:

May 6, 2004

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As Chairman of the Committee on Government Reform, I was shocked to learn at a Committee hearing this morning how little progress has been made on reducing backlogs and increasing reciprocal recognition of agency security clearances for industry

personnel working on security sensitive matters. The hearing, entitled “What’s the Hold Up? A Review of Security Clearance Backlog and Reciprocity Issues Plaguing Today’s Government and Private Sector Workforce,” revealed the General Accounting Office’s conclusion that, on average, the amount of time required to obtain a security clearance has increased over the past few years and now requires over a year to complete. These delays and backlogs make our country less secure by depriving industry and the government of the personnel necessary to develop security sensitive technology and otherwise carry out the government’s national security mission.

Even more disturbing, GAO identified many of the weaknesses in the system by which DoD clears industry personnel *more than two decades ago*. Despite the numerous studies, panels, boards, and working groups assembled by DoD over the past decades, these problems persist.

Clearly there are things that can be done today to address the issue of security clearance backlogs. Among these actions is an immediate deployment of personnel and working capital to meet the growing investigative and adjudicative needs of the Defense Security Service. DoD can also do its part in guaranteeing reciprocity for all who hold a valid U.S. agency security clearance as required by Executive Order 12968. Finally, DoD can immediately begin to work with OPM and private stakeholders to streamline the system and whenever possible take advantage of the latest information technology systems to efficiently and effectively process security clearances.

As Chairman of this Committee, I encourage you to work with other agencies and private sector stakeholders to establish immediate solutions to the security clearance backlog. If over time these problems persist, I am confident that Congress will step in and legislate solutions. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks have made clear the necessity for national and homeland security, and we need the personnel cleared at the appropriate level and with the appropriate speed to protect our nation. I encourage you to make solving the security backlog a top priority for your Department. I stand ready to work with you and others to make this system work.

Sincerely,

Tom Davis
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Henry A. Waxman, Ranking Minority Member